Mr. Barak speaking at the United Nations – 2000

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Mr. Barak (Israel): Three millenniums ago in Jerusalem, the prophets Isaiah and Micah kindled the torch of harmony and justice among nations, and said:

> and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any moreî. (The Holy Bible, Micah IV:3)

Towards Jerusalem, abode of Godís temple, Jews around the world have turned in prayer three times each day for 2,000 years, repeating the vow of their exiled ancestors:

> If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning.

Jerusalem, the eternal capital of Israel, now calls for a peace of honour, of courage and of brotherhood. We recognize that Jerusalem is also sacred to Muslims and Christians the world over and is cherished by our Palestinian neighbours. A true peace will reflect all these bonds. Jerusalem will remain united and open to all who love it.

The opportunity for peace in the Middle East is now at hand, and must not be missed. We envision a peace that will preserve the vital interests and the dignity of all sides. But no side can achieve 100 per cent of its dreams if we are to succeed. My Government has shown, in negotiations with Syria and with the Palestinians, as well as in our

pullout from Lebanon, that it can make painful decisions for the sake of peace. It remains to be seen whether our counterparts are also capable of rising to the magnitude of the hour.

The States Members of the United Nations can lend a pivotal hand by encouraging the difficult process of reconciliation and by opposing any unilateral measures, which might well spark a renewed cycle of violence and obliterate the prospects of peace.

I call out to Chairman Arafat to join me in this historic passage. We are at the Rubicon, and no one of us can cross it alone. History will judge what we do in the next days and weeks. Were we courageous and wise enough to guide our region across the deep river of mistrust into a new land of reconciliation? Or did we shrink back at the waterís edge, resigned to lie in wait for the rising tide of bloodshed and grief?

Fifty years ago, it took the shock of a Second World War and the worst genocide to bring world leaders to form the United Nations. In the name of the State of Israel, I commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for so masterfully conceiving this Summit, which powerfully declares our potential for solidarity. More than ever, the borders of faith and culture have receded, showing us just how close we are in our hopes and fears, how little time each of us has on this planet, and how much we have yet to repair and heal. If we are brave enough to manifest the simple but profound truth that the plight of individuals anywhere is the responsibility of leaders everywhere, we will be much closer to fulfilling those prophetic visions proclaimed long ago in Jerusalem.

May this historic meeting be a harbinger of hope for all humanity. May

we muster the inspiration and the fortitude to bequeath to our children a better world, a brighter future, a more secure life. It is in our hands.